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10th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Address by Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Gambia.

Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jammeh: Thanks be to the almighty Allah for giving me another opportunity to address this global body at a time when human civilization is teetering on the brink of a major catastrophe. Before going further, let me convey our warm felicitations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. While wishing you success, I would like to assure you of the support and cooperation of the Gambia during your tenure as President of the Assembly. I would also like to commend your predecessor, Mr. John William Ashe, for his able stewardship as President of the General Assembly.

It is a well-known fact that injustice, iniquities, exclusion and greed all contribute to the creation of international tensions that can lead to catastrophic consequences, conflicts, wars, death and destruction. Today we witness lamentable inertia on the part of the United Nations, as powerful Member States take undue advantage of weaker Members; unjust economic and financial sanctions are imposed on other Member States; others are bullied and their natural resources looted; or wars are waged against still others, simply in the name of democracy, freedom and regime change. All of those actions are based on false pretences.

That is not the scenario that the noble and distinguished gentlemen, the founders of the United Nations and its Charter, envisaged. What those great founding fathers of the United Nations intended over half a century ago was a world body committed to promoting the principles and ideals of peace and security and advancing the causes of justice and equality; freedom for all; and respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States, rich or poor, black or white, big or small; and respect for the social, spiritual, religious and cultural values of all peoples. Therefore, in order to uphold the founding principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Member States must avoid the promotion of all forms of aggression, confrontation and dangerous tension by exercising maximal restraint in the pursuit of their individual or collective national interests at the expense of others. In fact, the pursuit of one's interest at the expense of the legitimate interests and security of others is criminal.

Invariably, when major tensions erupt into conflicts or wars, the world economy as a whole suffers, with major disruptions or reversals in the developing countries. That has been evident in the wake of past

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regional or international conflicts, when oil prices, for example, surged, with the developing countries bearing the brunt of the debilitating consequences. In short, the United Nations must be seen not as a prejudicial but rather as an all-embracing global body that stands for the interests of not only the few and the powerful but all its Member States.

The Gambia acknowledges with satisfaction the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), and the resulting establishment of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and associated consultative forums, including the African regional consultations on the sustainable development goals. While the Gambia appreciates the proposals of the Open Working Group on the post-2015 development framework, it is hoped that the goals and targets outlined thus far will reflect an integrated and transformative agenda that would ultimately build upon the gains made from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in order to fully address the many difficult challenges that we face today.

It is in that connection that we welcome the choice of the theme for this session, namely, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". That theme is indeed pertinent and timely, as it gives fresh impetus to our ardent desire to identify a set of global priorities to steer the international development agenda, once the MDGs expire at the end of 2015. However, in launching that new initiative for transformative change, we must not allow novelty to mask any shortcomings of the MDGs experiment. There is a need to take stock of the achievements and failures of those Goals and indeed to renew support to those developing countries, particularly the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries, that may still have difficulties in meeting their critical MDG targets before the end of 2015.

At a time when the world is facing multiple and complex challenges, there is a need to pay attention to the commanding role that the United Nations should be playing in advancing international peace and security, justice and the fundamental rights and freedoms of all peoples. The attainment of the post-2015 sustainable development goals will be elusive, unless the United Nations begins to execute its core mandate in earnest and exercises its commanding role in dealing with the host of local and international crises that are disruptive to development. A few current issues stand out on which the United Nations has yet to be seen to be playing a leading role.

First, there is Ebola, a deadly haemorrhagic fever that has claimed more than 2,000 lives in West Africa, mostly in the severely affected countries of the Republics of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The World Health Organization has warned that, if no major efforts are made immediately, more lives will be lost and the economies of those countries will come under serious strain. Already, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have projected that, owing to disruptions in the labour force and productive sectors of the economies of those countries, declines in their respective economic growths could range from 1.5 to 3.5 percentage points, if current conditions remain unchecked.

For those affected countries, all development efforts are now on hold as they grapple with that contagious and deadly disease. It is encouraging that the United States Government has committed, rather belatedly, some funds and military assets to curb the spread of that disease. That gesture is more than just humanitarian aid. It is also, as President Obama said, in the national security interest of the United States. That is true because in a globalized, interconnected world, infectious diseases can easily spread to any part of the world. It is for that reason that the United Nations should take the lead in mobilizing international support to fight Ebola, which is an evident danger not only to West Africa but to the world at large. On that note, we want to thank the Russian Federation for being one of the first major Powers to respond to the outbreak of deadly Ebola by providing scientific and medical teams to some of those countries as soon as the outbreak was announced.

Secondly, for some time now, the world has been witnessing the bloodiest and most heinous form of terrorism, unleashed by satanic and sadistic human vermin disguised as Islamic militants, who are acting ostensibly in the name of Islamic purity. In reality, those sons of infamy and their shameless and deceitful claims of devotion to the peaceful and noble religion of Islam are, in fact, an insult not only to all true Muslims, but to our Prophet and humankind in general.

Before the emergence of the mujahideen in Iran and later in Afghanistan in the 1980s, which was a movement subsequently associated with Islamic terrorism by the Western mainstream media in total disregard for

its creation and sponsorship by the Western Powers to fight proxy wars against the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviets in Afghanistan, there existed no Islamic terrorism. Islam in its entire history has never been associated with violence or terrorism, as those activities are *haram*, or forbidden, for a Muslim. Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance and has nothing to do with the activities of those anti-Islamic bands of dangerous criminals, who spread nothing but deep-seated hatred for human life and whose sole intention is to desecrate and defame Islam.

Consequently, those various treacherous hate groups cannot be associated with Islam, as our Islamic religion is pure and unique and cannot therefore be classified into varying degrees such as moderate Islam, democratic Islam, extreme Islam or violent Islam. Simply put, Islam is a pure religion that encourages the best of human behaviour and interpersonal relationships, among other virtues, as prescribed by Allah, the almighty creator. In other words, the adherents of those lunatic fringe groups of bandits and gangsters, such as Boko Haram, the Islamic State in Syria and Al-Qaida, are dangerous criminals and enemies of human civilization and development and should therefore be wiped off the face of the Earth, because we do not need them.

Thirdly, the situation in the Middle East remains highly volatile, and the United Nations has been watching the cycle of violence in the region rather helplessly. In the most recent conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis, approximately 2,000 people from Gaza, mostly women and children, died at the hands of the Israeli army, and approximately 70 Israelis, all of them soldiers except for three children, lost their lives. The continuing expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, despite repeated calls for restraint by the international community, is unacceptable, as it undermines any prospects for a two-State solution. The United States Government has played a very strategic and useful mediating role in the past, but the United Nations must now take up its commanding role in seeking a peaceful settlement that is just, durable and acceptable to all the Members of the United Nations.

Fourthly, as part of its core mandate in promoting global peace and security and greater understanding among peoples of different backgrounds and cultures, the United Nations must do more to advocate a culture of peace, tolerance and understanding, not only among the world's great religions but also among Member States themselves. That is important, as we continue to witness a growing propagation of disinformation and misrepresentation, especially by the Western media, about Islam in general and the application of sharia law, particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, and sharia is the legal system in Islam and the only divine Constitution for not only the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia but all Islamic States. Therefore, the incessant criticisms and misrepresentations of the application of sharia law in Saudi Arabia or anywhere else are disrespectful and abhorrent. It is an insult to all true Muslims to describe sharia law as barbaric. As a matter of fact, the most barbaric laws are those that are not based on any divine teachings. Sharia is the legal system that the almighty Allah has prescribed for all Muslims, and we will apply it to the letter.

In the same vein, the General Assembly should be commended for the designation, two years ago, of World Interfaith Harmony Week. It urged Member States to designate the first week of February each year as World Interfaith Harmony Week, when messages of goodwill and tolerance are spread through mosques, churches and other places of worship. While that was a good beginning for promoting peace and harmony among religions and peoples of different belief systems, the United Nations must do more to counter the continuing attacks on Islam, in particular by people who do not even believe in the existence of a supreme creator called Allah. Those infidels have no moral high ground to describe any religion — because they do not believe in God, and religion belongs to God — much less say anything about a religion as pure, authentic and noble as Islam.

Finally, the United Nations must play its central role in addressing the injustices associated with the unilateral or bilateral application of economic and financial sanctions by one Member State against another as a coercive tool of foreign policy, because that contravenes the fundamental principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the principles and norms governing peaceful coexistence among sovereign States. In that regard, the Gambia calls on the United States Government to unconditionally end the long-standing United States embargo on Cuba, which has brought about untold hardship for the Cuban people. Is it not ironic that the Power talking today about respecting Ukrainian sovereignty and freedom to choose their own way of life is the same Power that has maintained a system of unjustifiable collective

punishment against the Cuban people for almost five decades, thereby devastating their economy, simply because, just as the Ukrainians today, Cubans decades ago opted for a system of governance of their choice?

That brings me to the subject of climate change. Climate change and development are inextricably linked. The impact of climate change is felt in all countries, particularly developing countries, as it undermines their ability to achieve sustainable development. While Africa is not responsible for the pollution and the other factors causing climate change, it stands to suffer the most. With 96 per cent of Africa's agriculture being dependent on rainfall and 50 per cent of the fisheries-related jobs estimated to be lost by 2050, climate change poses dire consequences for livelihoods in Africa. The Gambia firmly believes that mitigating the adverse effects of climate change requires a timely and decisive global response. It is a challenge that should unite us, not divide us. In that regard, the Gambia joins other countries affected by climate change and like-minded groups in urging the developed countries that are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to fully implement their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

In 1974, the Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (resolution 3201 (S-VI)), which was designed to address some legitimate concerns of developing countries, such as improving their terms of trade and other issues relating to the promotion of a more equitable international economic system. Many of the political, economic and social issues that inspired the new international economic order still remain unresolved, four decades after that historic declaration. As the post-2015 agenda attracts our attention today, we must not relegate those old concerns of developing countries to the dustbin of history. In a nutshell, their old concerns, as well as their new aspirations, must no longer be set aside. To that end, the foundation of any transformative agenda should logically begin with genuine reform of the global governance institutions, particularly the United Nations system.

Given the current membership of the Security Council, the reform of that important organ of the world body is long overdue. We African leaders have for a very long time been calling attention to the need to restore the effectiveness and legitimacy of the United Nations by allocating two permanent Seats with full veto powers, as well as two non-permanent seats on the Security Council to reflect current geopolitical realities.

If the demands for the reform of the Security Council in the interest of equity and justice cannot be accommodated, then concrete action must be taken for the General Assembly to assume all the powers of the Security Council and its responsibilities, including the power to impose sanctions. Under such an arrangement, all decisions of the General Assembly would have to be voted for by all Members and endorsed by the majority of its membership, thus ensuring a more democratic and transparent global body called the United Nations.

On a final note, I want to call the attention of the General Assembly and the Security Council to the very frequent and mysterious sinking and capsizing of boats carrying mostly black African migrants looking for greener pastures in the West, only to end up in body bags on European shores. Strangely enough, those countries, which pretend to love Africans so much that they are always preaching to African leaders about good governance, the rule of law and respect for human life and rights, have been eerily quiet about the very dangerous, racist and inhuman behaviour of deliberately causing boats carrying black Africans to sink, selecting only a few lucky ones to be rescued and sent to concentration camps, called asylum-seeker camps. Those camps are as bad as Nazi concentration camps, and nobody, no country or human rights institution in the West has ever raised the alarm to that sort of genocide in the twenty-first century.

If earlier Africans who received the European explorers before colonialism had treated them the same way, Africa would not have been colonized for 400 years. The European explorers were nothing short of people seeking greener pastures for their fellow Europeans, as Europe had, at the time, turned into brown pastures. After 400 years of colonial looting and misrule in Africa, Africa today is reduced from green to brown pastures, owing to overgrazing. Now African explorers are not only unwelcome, but are greeted with instant death on European soil. That is unacceptable.

The United Nations must therefore conduct a full and impartial investigation into that man-made catastrophe, namely, the sinking or capsizing of boats carrying young Africans to Europe. If those boats are able to cross the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, only to sink on European coasts, we must find out what deadly mysterious force exists on the European Mediterranean coasts that causes boats carrying young

Africans to disintegrate and sink upon arrival. Racism, greed and hatred can only breed hatred, violence and disastrous confrontation between races. We African leaders should stand up together, I hope, to protect those young Africans from mass murder on European coasts. I hereby call on the United Nations to commission such an investigation as a matter of priority and urgency in order to avert a major racial confrontation. We have the right as Africans to defend our black people, wherever they are. As we welcomed all races to Africa, we will not accept that Africans should be treated like dogs, with impunity. That is unacceptable. If the United Nations fails to take action, we will take action. And the action we take will be determined by us.

In the Gambia we do not attack people because they are white or black, or because of their religion. No foreigner in the Gambia would say, "I was attacked because I am a foreigner". If a foreigner comes into contact with the police, it is because he has committed an offence for which even a Gambian would be arrested. If we cannot tolerate each other, the world will never see peace, because nobody can stop migration. The Almighty Allah created this world for us to move around, the same way Europeans moved around when Europe was bankrupt. Europeans came to Africa for 400 years. We never killed them. They overstayed, and some of us had to fight to get them out. Now they have overgrazed our land. We also want greener pastures, but Europeans cannot accept us. Let them send Africans back, but do not kill them. Europeans have no right to kill them.

Out of the hundreds of European explorers who came to the Gambia in those days, only one European died on the River Gambia over a span of 400 years. Today, over a span of five years, more than 500 Gambians have lost their lives on European coasts. That is unacceptable. Enough is enough, and the United Nations must intervene, and intervene quickly, or else we will all live to regret our failure to take appropriate action at the right time.

Geopolitical realities have changed. Let the West accept that, and with us endeavour to change along with those realities, as we move together towards the peaceful, brighter future we want. The so-called military super-Powers must know that humankind would be sent back to a pre-Stone Age should they be reckless enough to unleash World War III.

We cannot have our cake, eat it as we please, and at the same time dictate to others how, when and where they should eat theirs. In the twenty-first century, humankind has a need only for super-Powers of peace and development, not for mediaeval European-style warmongers. Why can we not accept the diversity of the human race and its attendant diversity in cultures, religions and ways of life as each of its diverse groups deems fit?

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement he has just made.

Al Hadji Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Komorowski (*spoke in Polish; English text provided by the delegation*): I would first like to congratulate Mr. Kutesa on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

In the opening sentences of our Charter, we read that the United Nations was set up to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the equal rights of nations large and small. In the year marking the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War and the seventy-fifth of the start of the Second World War, those words hold a particular resonance for us — for Poles, Europeans and every society affected by those tragedies. Both wars were waged partly on Polish territory; the second began with Nazi Germany's aggression in collaboration with the Soviet Union. Our past compels us to reflect on the Charter's words and those events of twentieth-century history, which form the backdrop to our decision-making at the national

level, and similarly bind together the entire international community gathered here at the United Nations.

One result of the First World War was to foster the dream of a world without war. That belief and general desire bore fruit in the League of Nations, the first collective security system in history. It included all the factors needed to make a positive mark on history and to maintain peace and security. It functioned on a foundation of important rules that prohibited war and encouraged the peaceful settlement of disputes. It had shared bodies, disarmament conferences and an international judiciary.

Despite all those institutions, however, we were unable to make a world without wars. The League eventually became an easy target, if not an object of ridicule. Yet it was not the League itself that failed. It was failed by its members, and chiefly by the Powers that had been entrusted with special responsibility for implementing its principal task. They failed their test in the face of the expansion of totalitarian regimes on both the left and the right. The emergence of communism, national socialism and many militaristic dictatorships was in part due to the First World War. Those systems fed on conflict, because ideological war and war against other peoples — against other men — were part of their identity.

Those threats could have been resisted in time, but the democratic world failed, choosing a short-sighted policy of appeasement and the satisfaction of dictatorships' appetites at the expense of weaker States. The price paid for that negligence was the Second World War, and the whole of humankind had to pay a price that would once have been unimaginable. It is from the horrible experience of that war, of the Holocaust, that the legal notion of genocide stems. Its originator and the author of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was a Polish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, who understood the criminal nature of both kinds of totalitarianism even before the war.

After the hecatombs of the war, the international community decided once again to build a system of collective security. I am glad that next year we will be celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations. There are very few now who remember the world without our Organization, and it would be difficult to imagine the world without its activity. During the nearly seven decades of its existence, the United Nations has had a track record of amazing achievements, but also many failures.

Today, however, the situation is especially worrying, as symptoms of the problems that once brought down the League of Nations are reappearing. We are witnessing a rebirth of the super-Power, a return to the thinking that divided the world into categories of geopolitical zones of influence and that has already led the international community into a morass of hatred, confrontation and conflict. The United Nations should remain vigilant in the face of a return to such attitudes— it should tolerate no departure from the principles of security and international relations laid down in the Charter. Tolerance of such attitudes always ends badly and not infrequently leads to catastrophe.

We cannot overemphasize that the occupation of Crimea and the aggression in Ukraine violate the standards of international law and trample on the fundamental values of the United Nations. The ideological background of the conflict is a return to the rhetoric of the first half of the twentieth century, a return to the logic of zones of influence, of might is right, and of ruthless imperial domination of weaker neighbours, which are apparently obliged to be obedient satellites of a Power redesigning the foundations of the civilized international order.

The Security Council, the organ responsible for peace, proved to be ineffective when faced with conflicts in Ukraine and other regions of the world, partly due to its rules of operation. We are threatened by a further descent into powerlessness if such rules are not amended. It is salutary that the General Assembly rose to the challenge when, in resolution 68/262, of 27 March 2014, it took the side of the weaker party that was being targeted in an act of imperial aggression.

I feel all the more sad and concerned uttering the foregoing words, since we are celebrating the joyful twenty-fifth anniversary of the abolishment of communism and the collapse of the Soviet bloc in Poland, which is also being celebrated in other countries of the region. That "spring of nations", the second in the history of Europe, brought freedom to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and respect for human rights and good democratic governance. At the time, changes for the better took place throughout Europe, and even worldwide. The Iron Curtain fell and so did the bipolar division of the world. The Cold War confrontation and its accompanying threats of nuclear conflict became things of the past.

That historical change began in Poland with the establishment of the 10 million-strong Solidarity movement, a peaceful opposition movement against totalitarian oppression and the violation of nations' rights. The victorious parliamentary elections of 4 June brought about the formation, on 12 September 1989, of the first non-Communist Government in our part of Europe since the Second World War, the Government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

Just two weeks later, on 25 September, precisely 25 years ago, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in that new Government, Professor Krzysztof Skubiszewski, addressed the Assembly from this very rostrum (see A/44/PV.4) and proclaimed that the new Poland would not respect the logic of zones of influence. He further revealed that we would respect existing treaties and obligations, as well as the security interests of other States, and none of that would result in any limitations with respect to choosing or changing the system of polity.

That new logic of international relations has been most beneficial for Europe, where a great wave of unification has been set in motion thanks to the strengthening of the mechanisms of integration of the European Community and its expansion to include many new States. In our region, the European Union is a synonym for peace. It was established so that there would be no more wars on a continent that had previously been notorious for them. And indeed, the European Union has become a significant force for peace in Europe and far beyond its borders, to which Poland has contributed in a highly active way.

We had the right to hope that the benefits of the end of divisions in Europe and of the logic of imperial zones of influence would be shared by a growing number of States and nations — and not only in Europe — and that they would be able to decide their fate democratically and build their lives in peace and prosperity, free from external domination. We have hoped and continue to hope for a democratic modernization of Russia. But what happened six months ago in Eastern Europe dealt a blow to that hope and threatened security on our European continent. In our part of Europe, people are again asking themselves whether war as a method of obtaining a political goal will also be the long-term European reality. We cannot acquiesce to the brutalization of international life anywhere in the world — far less so in Europe, where the wounds of two World Wars are still healing.

Yet wars and conflicts are also continuing in other parts of our globe and are creating countless victims, suffering and destruction. We have all been surprised by the rapid development of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The brutality of the actions of its fighters, who are murdering and persecuting people of every faith, including those who profess Islam, must inspire terror and trigger a response from the international community. ISIL's barbarism is a challenge for all of humankind, irrespective of religion, ethnic origin or political viewpoint. We, the States faithful to the United Nations Charter, cannot shirk our responsibility for providing security. We are responsible for protecting those threatened by cruel violence. Yet everything must be done to ensure that the actions we take do not contravene the United Nations Charter.

We express our concern and sympathy for the civilian victims of the conflicts and tragedies in Syria, Libya, Israel, the Gaza Strip and many African States. All those conflicts, and to an even greater degree the civil wars in some African countries, are accompanied by humanitarian catastrophes. The United Nations, and especially the super-Powers that can influence the participating parties, should do everything to stop them.

Nobody could ever take the place of the United Nations and its agencies in providing aid to refugees and other victims of humanitarian tragedies. On behalf of Poland, I hereby express appreciation for them. and recognition for the thousands of courageous members of humanitarian organizations, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations who, amid all the dangers and frequently at the cost of their own lives, hurry to the aid of those who suffer persecution. They help those whose security and health is threatened — those left alone, without a roof over their heads, who are far away from homes to which, due to destruction, many will never be able to return. An ever-increasing number of people are experiencing suffering and cruelty linked to military conflicts. That horrifying trend must be stopped by our common efforts.

The fact that, in so many places, we are witnessing conflicts that entail human tragedy and the deaths of thousands of people is due, as a general rule, to a failure to observe fundamental human rights. Entire communities and nations are denied influence over political decisions. Power without control is, in most cases, corrupt and self-loving, incapable of lifting

countries out of underdevelopment and poverty. That is the background to the conflicts and rebellions in Ukraine, Iraq, Libya and many other places in the world. That is why we must increase our efforts to help by offering development assistance to bring about social, economic and political transformation. Otherwise, the only alternative to dictatorship will be chaos.

Poland is especially attached to the role of democracy in the life of nations, their development and international activity. We know how much we lost because of the absence of democracy under communism, and we know how much we gained when we returned to democracy as a means of achieving our civic aspirations and an expression of our national sovereignty. It was for that purpose that a broad international initiative by the Community of Democracies was born in Warsaw in 2000. That is precisely why my country established the international Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Award for activity in support of democracy and fundamental freedoms.

Poland steadfastly believes that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms for all. We will strive to attain the appropriate inclusion of those questions in the new United Nations development agenda. Through our experiences over the past few decades in our history, we have learned the importance of solidarity, responsibility and involvement — the triad of principles in the United Nations system we are faithful to.

We fully acknowledge the involvement of the United Nations in the improvement of the social and economic situation in those regions of the world where conditions are the most difficult. Poland actively participates in the definition of the priorities and means of implementation of the new development agenda that will replace the Millennium Development Goals of 2000, and we will purposefully participate in making it a reality. The new development agenda should fully and coherently integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, while at the same time focusing on the reduction of poverty and protection of the natural environment.

Reaching an international understanding on that matter is a task that is as ambitious as it is difficult — yet it is necessary and feasible. The output of the previous Assembly session, worked on by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals under the highly efficient co-chairmanship of Kenya and Hungary, defines the course of further discussion on the matter. Poland will continue its active involvement in a dialogue that should bring about the development of a new, ambitious and universal post-2015 development agenda.

It is vitally important to halt any further global climate change caused by the development of human civilization and to adjust to the changes that are already irreversible. Here lurk existential issues pertaining to security, the problems of economic development, the maintenance of biological diversity in the Earth's ecosystem and quality of life. In its capacity as host of the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Warsaw in November 2013, and as we still hold the presidency of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Poland remains committed to achieving a successful conclusion to the negotiations. We believe that it is possible to achieve an understanding in a manner that is fair to countries at various levels of economic development. Agreement is possible, and I hope such an understanding will be arrived at in the near future. I would like to reiterate that, despite the hardships and costs of economic transformation, Poland has decreased its greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 30 per cent since 1988 — that is, it has greatly exceeded the reduction obligations stipulated in the Kyoto Protocol.

Poland is deeply involved in various fields of activity covered by this Organization, ranging from human rights to disarmament. That is why we know perfectly well that nothing can replace the United Nations system, which is continuously improvable. Poland is currently assuming an increasing measure of responsibility for cooperation in development, humanitarian aid and climate protection. We are ready to share our experience and our ideas as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. We intend to support a reform of that body that will increase its representative character and, in parallel, reinforce its efficiency. The reform should primarily concern the Council's mandate in situations involving the principle of the responsibility to protect, which was approved by our community in 2005. The idea must be to develop a mechanism that will provide the Council with the capacity to act in such situations, while at the same time making it impossible to use the mandate of the Council for purposes other than the discharge of that responsibility.

I have raised that idea from this rostrum twice already. It should perhaps be combined with a broader reform of the Council, the outlines of which were given shape before the historic summit held in 2005. The situation is unchanged from nearly 70 years ago — we want to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and the rights of nations, large and small.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bērziņš: As we enter a crucial session of the General Assembly, we will define our post-2015 direction. Our way ahead must be based on the triangle of security, development and human rights. If one of those elements is not present, the other two will fail.

This year, we commemorated the grim anniversaries of the First and Second World Wars. Both wars began in Europe, but quickly spread throughout the world, destroying the lives of countless millions. The League of Nations and the United Nations were built on the ashes of those wars.

Today again, global security and peace are challenged by forces willing to rewrite the history and rules of the international order. The aggression of Russia against Ukraine has defied the basic principles of the United Nations, uprooting the very foundation of the international system. It has grabbed part of a sovereign European country, using previously unseen tactics of warfare and immense propaganda against its neighbour. It enabled the tragic shooting down of a civilian airplane. It has shown that agreements and commitments do not matter, and it wantonly ignores and manipulates international opinion. Those actions cannot be qualified otherwise than as a threat to global peace and security. The world, including the General Assembly, has supported Ukraine's territorial integrity. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sebastopol by Russia has been condemned and will not be recognized by the international community.

Russia has a vital role to play in security and stability in Europe and should be part of the solution — not part of the problem. Latvia hopes that the ceasefire agreed to on 5 September will be implemented in a sustainable manner. Latvia therefore calls on Russia to immediately withdraw its armed forces from Ukrainian territory and stop sending weapons and mercenaries to the terrorist groups. We call upon Russia to return to respecting its international commitments and upholding international law.

Seventy-five years ago, the decay of the international system proved fatal to the Baltic States. Two totalitarian regimes — one under Hitler and the other under Stalin — divided Europe, and we lost our freedom for 50 long years. Twenty-five years ago, more than 2 million people joined hands and formed a human chain across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Baltic way clearly illustrated the people's demand for freedom and restoration of their statehood. The Baltic people made their choice. The Ukrainian people have the same right to choose their own democratic path, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Latvia supports the complementarity of efforts among international organizations at both the global and regional levels to use all instruments at their disposal to prevent the emergence of a frozen conflict in the eastern region of Ukraine; to help and support Ukraine; to uphold agreements and commitments and demand their fulfilment by all parties, including Russia; to maintain unity and reject attempts to divide Ukraine by reviving spheres of influence and establishing hidden support to terrorists as part of the new norms of Europe.

There is no alternative to an international order based on the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights and providing the foundation for long-term peace and security. The resolution of the protracted conflicts in Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh should remain high on the international agenda.

In addition, the security situation in the wider Middle East is very fragile. A solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is paramount in order to establish lasting stability in the region. Following the escalation of violence in recent months, the international community, including Latvia, has helped to address the emergency humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. We hope that the current ceasefire will be fully respected by both sides. However, only an agreement on a two-State solution, achieved through direct negotiations, will accomplish those goals.

We welcome the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons and related materials. While easing the continuing human suffering of Syrians is the immediate goal, the international community must continue political efforts to find a solution to that horrific conflict. Those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria must be held accountable by the International Criminal Court.

The limited ability of the Security Council to address the urgent situations in Syria and Ukraine in a timely manner underlines the need to move forward with reform of the Council. Latvia supports the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of membership. At the same time, the French initiative, aimed at restricting the use of the veto, merits our joint attention.

The completion of the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan this year will be an important step towards assumption by the people of full responsibility for peace and stability in the country. Despite all the challenges, the legacy of the mission is clear. Peace and security have been strengthened, including greater respect for human rights and greater opportunities for the Afghan people than ever before.

The recent presidential elections clearly showed the will of the Afghan people to live in a peaceful and democratic society. The people of Afghanistan will not be abandoned after 2014. International support to Afghanistan, including security protection, will be continued. I am convinced that cooperation and confidence-building between Afghanistan and its neighbours, including in Central Asia, will be key to long-term security solutions in the region.

The growing negative impact of violent extremist ideologies in Syria, Iraq and other countries is alarming. Militant fighters of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) have exploited instability in those countries and now pose a threat to ethnic and religious communities. In that context, Latvia joined the United States in coordinated efforts by the international community to counter ISIS. We strongly welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign fighters. Latvia has already begun to prepare measures to prevent the recruitment of and support to foreign fighters.

Latvia is concerned about the safety of journalists during political unrest and conflict. All imprisoned journalists must be released. Freedom of the media and free access to information, including online, are essential components of any democracy.

Armed conflicts in Africa have an impact upon stability and the sustainable development of the people. Latvia takes part in peace and security operations in Mali and the Central African Republic in order to contribute to conflict settlement and to improve the security situation in those regions. Latvia is ready to commit itself to strengthening United Nations global peacekeeping.

Latvia welcomes the ongoing dialogue between the E3+3 countries and Iran, which aims to negotiate a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme. The parties involved, in particular Iran, must make every effort to use the extended time frame to find a solution. We must work towards revitalizing the global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. The success of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons depends on re-establishing trust and a common purpose among the States parties. Latvia was one of the first States to sign and to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. We urge all United Nations Members to do the same.

Peace and security are both enablers of sustainable development and objectives in their own right. Without peaceful societies, we cannot achieve sustainable development. Each country has its own responsibility for achieving that goal. Our societies need honest and accountable Governments that protect them from violence and crime and ensure fundamental freedoms and sustainable economic growth.

Fourteen years ago, we, the States Members of the United Nations, made a historic commitment to eradicating extreme poverty and to improving the health and welfare of the world's people within 15 years. The new development agenda should go further. We must

address global challenges, such as conflicts, terrorism, inequalities, the absence of the rule of law, climate change and natural disasters. The social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability should be addressed in a balanced way.

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I thank the Secretary-General for his personal engagement in bringing together representatives of Governments, business, industry, finance and civil society to discuss climate change this week. Latvia supports the initiatives of the Secretary-General. The post-2015 agenda must be consistent with all human rights and be underpinned by the rule of law. It should address inequalities and discrimination, including by means of the advancement of information and communications technology. Those are key enablers for all spheres of development. Gender equality is essential to shaping respectful and equal relationships in society. Those values are important for Latvia. As an aspiring member of the Human Rights Council for the term 2015-2017, we will continue to promote such values globally. Last but not least, the post-2015 agenda should be built on strong accountability mechanisms and a strengthened global partnership. That requires the active engagement of Governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nation system.

In the first half of 2015, Latvia will assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union. Europe needs the world as much as the world needs Europe. That is why the Latvian presidency will focus on strengthening the European Union's involvement globally. We will actively work to promote Europe's cooperation with its neighbours and with the countries of Central Asia. I affirm my country's commitment to actively engaging in efforts to shape our common future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bongo Ondimba (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I assure him of the full support of my country. The remarkable work of his predecessor, Mr. John William Ashe, during the sixty-eighth session deserves our recognition. The same goes for the commendable and tireless efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as head of the Organization.

At the previous session, we deplored and condemned the cowardly terrorist attacks on the shopping centre in Nairobi. Now, inevitably, the current session takes place in an equally worrisome context, marked by serious threats to international peace and security. First, there is the advance of the elusive Boko Haram terrorist network, which is extending its area of influence to the border of the neighbouring countries of Gabon, wreaking havoc and killing without discrimination. Then, there is the recurrence of the epidemic of the Ebola haemorrhagic fever, with an unprecedented incidence of infection, which is plunging Africa into mourning. Allow me to pay tribute to the memory of those who have lost their lives trying to help those who are ill. I also pay solemn tribute to the men and women who risk their lives in their daily fight to eradicate the pandemic.

Given that the threat of Ebola is worldwide, national responses should be replaced by a comprehensive mobilization at the global level. In that regard, my country welcomes the recent steps taken by the African Union and the United Nations, as well as the many national initiatives that have been announced. I welcome the United Nations decision to dispatch an emergency medical mission to fight the Ebola epidemic in the affected countries. My country, which prevailed in its fight against several Ebola crises in the past, intends to make available the International Centre for Medical Research Centre in Franceville. The Centre's expertise in treating that disease has been proven.

I am pleased that this session allows us to debate a topic that concerns all of us, namely "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". For Gabon, the report recently adopted by the General Assembly on sustainable development goals (A/68/970) is a solid foundation in the development of that agenda. My country welcomes the fact that African priorities, including the eradication of extreme poverty, the promotion of sustainable agriculture and industrialization, and the protection of the environment, all figure prominently in that report.

I would like to recall here that Gabon entered the post-2015 development agenda process when it began to implement the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon. The plan is based on a vision, an approach that has led us to define a bold development programme. That programme, of course, incorporates the concerns reflected in the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the challenges of climate change and food security. It gives pride of place to everything that promotes the maximization of our youth potential. The strategy implemented by Gabon aims to accelerate the structural transformation of its economy by moving from a rentier economy to an economy of industries and services with high added-value in the near future.

In the current phase of implementing that programme, special attention is being devoted to competitiveness factors, such as the formation of human capital and the construction and upgrading of development infrastructure, including the development of a digital economy and the strengthening of energy-production capacities. Over the short term, we intend to devote greater efforts to education and training in order to improve the performance of our basic education system. The goal here is to enhance the employability of our workforce, provide a qualified labour force for our labour market and accelerate the integration of young people into the workforce. The development of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as food security, continues to receive sustained attention from my Government. Those are all areas where we thought it best to anticipate our leap in the post-2015 development agenda.

It is common knowledge that all those efforts can truly thrive only in a political, economic and social environment marked by good governance. To that end, Gabon has established various institutional instruments, such as the National Commission for the Fight against Illicit Enrichment, whose overall mission is to ensure transparency and accountability in the management of public funds. Since then, I have made the fight against corruption a priority strategic objective. Right now, large-scale inspection and verification missions are under way throughout the country with substantial results. I remain firmly convinced that, in order to establish a solid foundation for our post-2015 agenda, we need to tailor our economic environment, so as to ensure that transparency guides the awarding of public contracts and licenses, that investments produce a good return, and that economic actors respect their obligations vis-à-vis the State.

Gabon's commitment to the fight against climate change remains constant, given the seriousness of the problem. Indeed, as has already been pointed out, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change draws attention to the harsh reality of the damage caused by climate change. It would be wrong on our part to remain insensitive in the face of what is transpiring before our very eyes. That is why I welcome the commitments made by the heads of State and Government at the end of the Climate Summit held here on 23 September.

I reiterate Gabon's determination to bear its share of our common duty. Gabon's objective is to reduce, by 2025, more than half the greenhouse gas emissions per capita produced by every Gabonese. My country wishes to strengthen its contribution to the efforts of the international community aimed at the adoption of a more binding agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol. That is the purpose of the meeting that we will organize in Libreville from 18 to 19 March 2015, our "South Climate Initiative." As part of that initiative, which will take place after the important Lima Conference, we, the countries of the South, want to make a structured contribution for the success of the Paris Conference. The scale of climatic upheavals caused by global warming shows that climate change is a vital, even existential question. Given the extreme seriousness of the danger confronting us, we must unite. We need to work hand in hand towards the same goal, namely, to save the planet in Paris in December 2015.

In just one year, our Organization will celebrate its seventieth anniversary. That maturity should enable it to better respond to the multifaceted challenges that it faces. The effective implementation of the post-2015 development agenda must also be tackled. That is why we must continue our efforts to resolve crises and hotbeds of tension in various parts of the world.

Regarding the Central African Republic, Gabon continues to actively participate in the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union, the United Nations and the rest of the international community in seeking to stabilize the political, security, economic and humanitarian situation on the ground.

In that connection, I want to pay tribute to the Brazzaville Forum for National Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which concluded with the signing of a ceasefire agreement. Moreover, Gabon welcomes the effective establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which took over from the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic. Regarding Mali, Gabon supports the peace process that has been launched and supports the mediation efforts by Burkina Faso, Algeria and Morocco aimed at achieving a lasting peace. In South Sudan, Gabon supports the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union in the search for a negotiated political solution between the two parties.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I welcome the signing, under Egyptian mediation, of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. My hope is that that truce lasts and promotes the resumption of direct negotiations to achieve the widely shared vision of creating a viable Palestinian State existing in harmony alongside Israel in peace and security, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Regarding Western Sahara, Gabon welcomes the efforts based on dialogue and negotiations agreed to by our Organization. My country wants to reiterate its support for the Moroccan initiative, which we consider to be a courageous and realistic proposal that could lead to a lasting settlement. Finally, in terms of the embargo against Cuba, Gabon reiterates its position in favour of lifting it, because of its negative impact on the welfare of the population.

Never has the terrorist threat been as strong as in recent times, jeopardizing the survival of the institutions of the countries affected by that terrible phenomenon. In Africa, Boko Haram's activism pushes entire populations to live far from their homes and in terror, poverty and despair.

In the Middle East, the so-called Islamic State has extended its gruesome reign from eastern Syria to northern Iraq. Its establishment there has been accompanied by a lengthy sequence of rape, summary executions, decapitations and punishments of all types inflicted upon all those who, in the eyes of the extremists, symbolize the rejection of their radicalization.

As no nation is now spared the murderous folly of those negative entities, the fight against terrorism needs to be more concerted and organized. My country reiterates its support for international efforts undertaken to that end and reaffirms its firm condemnation of terrorist acts in all their forms and manifestations. In seeking to meet the security challenge of terrorism, we need to strengthen the operational capacities of our defence and security forces in conformity with the spirit of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Our concerns for peace and security are compounded by other cross-cutting threats, notably the poaching of and illicit trafficking in protected species. That growing phenomenon, especially in Central Africa, constitutes a threat at three levels: ecological, economic and security. My country therefore remains wedded to the London initiative of February 2014. We reaffirm our commitment to opposing poaching and to implementing a moratorium on the ivory trade. To that end, Gabon and Germany will organize tomorrow, 26 September. a side event on the issue.

My country is more determined than ever to cooperate further with other States in formulating a development tool that would take into account the global concerns of our populations. That will involve, inter alia, achieving progress in the reform of the United Nations system. It is from that perspective that Gabon, like other States Members of the United Nations, adheres to the "Delivering as one" initiative. Currently at the very core of United Nations reform, that approach aims at improving the coherence of the United Nations system's operational development activities.

Respect for human dignity and for fundamental freedoms remains at the heart of my Government's concerns. That factor underpins our chairmanship of the Human Rights Council, which we are holding in a very difficult international context marked by numerous human rights violations. Despite all those challenges, the Council has been able to react and to respond with solutions to emergency situations caused by such violations. Gabon's leadership has allowed constructive debate and has in particular prevented a lapse into politicized and polarized discussions. I

should like to reiterate my gratitude to those countries that have lent us their support to ensure the success of our mandate.

From this rostrum, I encourage the inclusion of the human rights dimension in the current consideration of the post-2015 agenda. Gabon urges such inclusion, and suggests that particular emphasis be placed on the link between human rights and sustainable development. Given all this, Gabon remains committed to engaging, alongside other States, in seeking collective solutions adapted to current challenges in preparation for a better world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Varela Rodríguez (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

I am from a region that, in my youth, lived through challenging conflicts. That inspired me to go into public life, which in turn has allowed me to address the General Assembly in my capacity as President of the Republic of Panama at a time when the world is enduring conflicts and very serious situations that call for all of us to take action. I am speaking on behalf of a noble, wholesome and peaceful people, whom I greet and warmly embrace from this rostrum. Panama is a peace-loving country that has granted me the opportunity to lead a Government that is steering our country to a foreign policy of unity and consensus, based on our geographic location and the mandate of being a champion of peace and the common good of all the inhabitants of this beautiful planet.

Despite the serious conflicts raging throughout the world today, America is at peace. The major challenges we face today are inequality, the fight against organized crime and drug and human trafficking, and the need to regulate migration flowing out of necessity into countries with more developed economies. Those challenges are being addressed by our Governments, but they require further coordination. As leaders, we must understand that in order to achieve and maintain peace throughout the world, we must first lead our nations along the same path. This is why I am committed to social justice, to strengthening the rule of law, and to leading an honest, humane Government that is in touch with the people and whose strength is based on the principle that public office is solely for the service of others, putting our country's resources at the service of the people of Panama, the region and the world.

Fourteen years ago, the Heads of State and of Government of the international community gathered in the General Assembly to approve the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which defined a global development agenda to address various common challenges and improve the standards of living of our peoples. Despite their differences of the time, countries were able to agree and to reach a consensus to respect the priorities of each nation, focusing on the achievement of fundamental goals aimed at guaranteeing the human potential of our citizens.

Today, nearly a decade and a half after that historic Declaration, all countries without exception, through different Governments, have made important progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nonetheless, not only have many of the challenges defined in the MDGs not been met, but new ones have arisen that require us to build a new consensus and to establish goals at the regional, hemispheric and global levels. That is why, on behalf of the people and the Government of Panama, I would like to reiterate our commitment to being a facilitator of dialogue that allows for bringing the international community together anew so that we may redefine the post-2015 global development agenda.

For the past five centuries, the isthmus of Panama has been the transit route of civilizations. Today, our

country is still committed to that role. This year, as we mark the centennial of the Panama Canal, we reiterate our commitment to being a nation at the service of the international community, with the Canal, our logistic system, ports, airports and our heartfelt embrace of all countries of the world.

As they do in this building, the United Nations Headquarters, all the worlds' flags come together in the Panama Canal, and that is a source of pride and satisfaction for all Panamanians. It makes us a country of convergence, and we therefore have a great responsibility to the Panamanian people and the international community. Furthermore, Panama has assumed the challenge of completing the Canal expansion project, which we will do with firmness, determination and the support of professionals and workers from Panama and various other nations.

Panamanians feel a great responsibility to contributing to the search for understanding in order to maintain social peace, promote international security and join efforts towards the solution of common problems that affect us. That is why we reaffirm today our vocation as a country of dialogue, ready to fulfil the responsibility of uniting the Americas and the world within the framework of the United Nations and in every opportunity we have to mediate in disputes that hinder us from reaching agreements towards tackling the new global challenges. In April 2015, our country will host the Summit of the Americas, and we are working on this event that will bring together all the Heads of State and Government of our hemisphere in order to promote integration and social peace with equity and prosperity.

The 193 countries of the world have different political systems, beliefs, religions and cultures that must be respected. In spite of those differences, we all face common challenges. That is why, in order to secure the well-being of our citizens, our Governments are called to find unity of criteria for strengthening multilateral systems, which must be engaged with all the strength of States in order to combat shared threats and problems.

Within conflicts and difficult situations at the global level, there are strong messages of hope — volunteer medical doctors from all over the world are making progress to fight Ebola in Africa, and several countries are united in the fight against terrorists whose atrocious crimes affect innocent people and threaten international peace and security. Panama is aware of those efforts and supports them. We express our solidarity with all victims and their families.

I am convinced that the men and women we elect to public office must serve only the people who elected us and manage public power temporarily granted to us with the purpose of improving the quality of life of our population. Politics is one of the strongest expressions of public service because it is the search for the common good. The greatest legacy, which I will strive to build during the next five years, is to leave the Panamanian people a functional democracy, to strengthen the rule of law, where public servants are accountable only to the nation, with strong institutions, accountability and without impunity, with a view to guaranteeing that public administrations are honest and transparent. All Governments have the obligation to ensure that State resources are used exclusively in the service of our citizens, and that all public works and projects have the people's interests in mind.

Committed to that mission and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, I became President of my country on 1 July and formed a Government that will continue to foster the economic growth enjoyed by Panama, while giving priority to public investment that has greater impact on the quality of life of all Panamanians. With an average domestic economic growth of 7 per cent, increasing foreign investment, legal security, low inflation and unemployment rates, and a consolidated democratic system, we are making good on the proposals for which I was elected.

During our mandate, we have taken strong measures to curb speculation in the cost of food. We are working to ensure that Panamanian families have adequate housing with access to drinking water, basic sanitation, water supply, sewage systems and treatment plants for waste water and solid waste. We have launched major social projects for our youth so that they grow up in safe neighbourhoods with better opportunities, jobs, sports facilities and cultural centres to keep them away from crime.

Our public schools will have adequate facilities and teachers trained in the English language, in order to promote a bilingual education. Our social welfare programmes will allow all students to finish high school and senior citizens to live with dignity. Our students will have the opportunity to go to college or study at newly established higher technical institutes that will prepare them for the new jobs that our economy is creating in the areas of logistics and tourism, inter alia.

Our public health system will be unified, and the resulting savings will be used to strengthen preventive health programmes, ensuring better medical care, and premium quality treatments and medication. We are building a modern and efficient public transportation system with the new projects to add second and third lines to the Metro of Panama City, thereby improving the quality of life of our people. We will develop tourism and support air connectivity to and from principal cities in the United States, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. We will protect our logistical and financial systems to prevent organized crime and gangs from gaining access to them, and we shall tackle organized crime and gangs with the full force of the State in order to defeat them and keep them away from our youth and our neighbourhoods.

Our Government will work tirelessly to prepare our young people to be responsible citizens of the world and care for our natural resources in order to ensure sustainable development. We will work closely with the private sector and civil society in order to fulfil those national goals, the Millennium Development Goals and the new challenges of the global agenda.

We live in a diverse world, with different cultures, religions and political systems, but we can always find common ground in the well-being of our citizens. That was the approach that led to the successful adoption of the Millennium Declaration, and it will be the key to defining and fulfilling the post-2015 development agenda.

Panama is a country that is respectful of others and willing to serve as a bridge to understanding, on the basis of respect for diversity, tolerance, pluralism and human rights. Above all, the Assembly can be assured that Panama's Government is a Government of men and women who respect the law and are willing to share experiences, learn from best practices and contribute to global peace, socio-economic development and the well-being of all peoples.

I would like to conclude by sharing a statement that has been with me since my youth: "The time has come to put our capacity to use in service of others." May God give us the strength to continue to build together a better world for our citizens and for future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke in French*): I am delighted to be here today to once again make a contribution, on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the debate on the present and future of humankind. I am especially delighted as this sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the international situation is particularly delicate. If we are not careful, three of its phenomena in particular will surely delay us in achieving our agreed goals. I am referring to the issues of terrorism, the resurgence of Ebola in Africa and the many threats to peace in various areas around the globe.

Despite the commendable efforts of States and international organizations, terrorism, an extreme form of human intolerance, continues to claim victims — as many in number as they are innocent — around the world. Africa, which was once spared this type of senseless violence, is today at its epicentre. The people of Libya, Mali, Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria and many other countries in Europe, America and Asia are regularly bereaved by attacks, hostage-taking and summary executions. All States Members of our Organization must face the threat collectively, as a moral obligation and the only effective strategy to eradicate this barbarism surely and quickly.

Since the previous session of the General Assembly, a major public health problem has also hindered Africa on its path towards development, namely, through the loss in human lives caused by Ebola in some countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In less than six months, the disease has claimed over 2,000 lives, including approximately

40 in my own country. Africa is leading a heroic battle against the virus. It deserves support.

I am grateful to the international community, which is aware that, beyond the affected African populations today, all of humankind is under threat and which has extended its touching and effective solidarity to the affected countries. I thank the international community for its significant technical and logistical support in the response against the epidemic. In the future, I hope to see this fine example of human brotherhood prevail over the blind competition we see so often, and for it to occur with equal fervour in other sectors.

As for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is being touched for the seventh time by this scourge, we have not only managed to contain this new epidemic at its origin — in Boende territory, Equateur province — but also provided support to the fight against the epidemic in West Africa. Now that we have all but mastered the situation within the country, the Democratic Republic of Congo is ready to once again send its experts to the other affected countries.

I take this opportunity to announce from this rostrum that, on the basis of its over 30 years of experience in the management of Ebola outbreaks, in October the Democratic Republic of the Congo will set up multidisciplinary training centres to train health personnel to respond adequately, in terms of quality and quantity of care, to the needs of African countries that have been or could in the future be affected by such an epidemic.

As for the wars that are engulfing various parts of the world, including the Middle East, Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya and the Central African Republic, we should first recall that the United Nations was created following a world war, in order to establish mechanisms capable of preventing, or at least managing, situations that bring the world only grief and despair; and then we should ask ourselves why at this point, decades after the San Francisco Conference, humankind seems unable to maintain and guarantee peace. Knowing that in this area any contribution is welcome, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to working tirelessly for peace and stability in Africa and around the world. That is the reason for the presence of Congolese troop and police contingents in the Central African Republic.

The issue of peace is fundamental because, without it, humankind cannot realize or implement a transformative development programme, as the central theme of this session has it. Nor can that goal be achieved as long as terrorism is not contained and epidemics such as Ebola are not defeated. From experience, we Congolese know that there is no challenge that cannot be met provided there is the will, the way and the determination. We all know where my country was barely 13 years ago. Today I am happy to say that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is standing on its feet once more. It is a country where a newfound peace is consolidated a little more every day: a country whose economy is one of the most dynamic on the continent, with an inflation rate close to zero, a growth rate that has exceeded the African average for almost a decade, and steadily increasing foreign exchange reserves; a country undergoing total reconstruction, with roads, schools, hospitals and much other infrastructure being built at an unprecedented rate and speed.

On the political front, consolidating democracy and strengthening national cohesion remain our top priorities. In that regard, I wish to confirm that our forthcoming elections will soon be held according to the schedule set by the relevant national institution, the Independent National Electoral Commission. Every effort is bring made to ensure that our country will emerge from them stronger, more peaceful and more united.

Regarding security, through the application of a judicious mix of political dialogue, diplomacy and military action we have moved steadily closer to the goal we have set ourselves of banishing negative forces from our land and thus helping to bring peace to the eastern part of the country and to our neighbours. In order to consolidate peace and improve social conditions for the people, we are working to improve the business climate so as to stimulate investment, promote greater added value locally and create more jobs.

As can be seen, my country has resolutely taken the road of reconstruction, development and re-emergence and the defeat of poverty, injustice and inequality. It is an undeniably daunting task, and we still have some way to go to achieve our ultimate goal. But the people of the Congo are tackling it with enthusiasm and selflessness, determined as never before to make our march towards progress irreversible and to propel the country to a level of development commensurate with its potential. To do that, we must preserve stability at all costs, and that is what we will put the majority of our efforts into from

now on. And we count on the support of our partners in prioritizing everything that may involve.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to reiterate the Democratic Republic of the Congo's continuing plea for Africa to be fairly represented in the decision-making organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. The fact is that it does not make sense that Africa, a continent with six of the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world today, whose growth rate and youthful population are portents of future demographic power and whose forests, freshwater reserves and arable lands make it essential to the implementation of sustainable development strategies, does not have a permanent seat within the entity responsible for ensuring peace and international security. It is high time that this changed. It is a question of fairness, and it is also a condition of our collective effectiveness.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Plevneliev: Let me congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa of Uganda on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I also extend my warmest gratitude to Mr. John Ashe for his work as President of the sixty-eighth session.

Over the past few months, Bulgaria and the Balkans have suffered unprecedented floods. Thousands of people lost their homes, crops were ruined and many innocent people died. The heavy storms were no longer news but a part of daily life. Nature once again reminded us that today, political statements alone were not sufficient. For the sake of our children and our planet, it is time to act. As a wise man once said, we did not inherit the Earth from our fathers; we borrowed it from our children. Climate change needs to be urgently addressed. I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for having organized the Climate Summit. Bulgaria will actively support the completion of the negotiations on the new, universal and legally binding climate agreement in 2015.

Bulgaria contributed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the development of the post-2015 development agenda through its successful participation in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The Group has fulfilled its mandate. The Group's report, together with the report of High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (A/67/890, annex), will be the leading documents for our future discussions as we enter the critical phase of the debate on the post-2015 development agenda. It is crucial that all sides stay engaged and committed to the final goal — an ambitious and forward-looking framework. No real transformative post-2015 development agenda will be possible unless we address the loopholes of the current Millennium Development Goals and build upon the lessons learned. The new framework should be founded on the principles of respect for human rights, inclusiveness, good governance and the rule of law. Youth-specific targets in the areas of education, health care and employment are of paramount importance as well.

Development is unthinkable without peace and security. The illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the conflict in eastern Ukraine have become one of the most serious threats to peace and security in Europe since the Second World War. The security environment in the Black Sea region has been seriously affected. The illegal annexation of Crimea undermines the international order. After the Second World War, we built our world on the clear principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. They were shattered to pieces in a matter of weeks. Bulgaria strongly supports the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. My country does not recognize the illegal referendum in Crimea and condemns the

annexation by Russia as a violation of international law. Bulgaria joined the numerous sponsors of resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

My country welcomes the ceasefire agreement and is looking forward to the implementation of the peace plan. Bulgaria commends all international efforts for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. We welcome the strong engagement of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the initiatives of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the efforts of the trilateral contact group. Russia should stop arming and supporting separatists in Ukraine.

In a few days, Ukrainians will vote for a new parliament. They have every right to choose their own future. I sincerely hope that those elections will be a major step forward in building a democratic and prosperous Ukraine. The signing and ratification of the European Union Association Agreements of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia represent an important milestone in the process of the European integration of those countries. The positive change witnessed today in the Balkans would not have been possible without the engine of the European integration.

The escalation of violence and the humanitarian situation in Syria continue to be a source of grave concern. Millions of refugees have fled their homeland in pursuit of peace in the neighbouring countries. Hundreds of thousands have lost their lives. More than 10,000 refugees have sought asylum in Bulgaria. A lasting solution to the conflict in Syria can be achieved only through an inclusive political process. We call on the Security Council to unite. The unity of the Security Council is crucial in order for the conflict to be resolved.

The Syrian crisis, along with the outbreak of violence and sectarian tensions in Iraq, has exacerbated the security and humanitarian situation in the entire Middle East region. Bulgaria strongly condemns the armed attacks and killings perpetrated by the Islamic State terrorist organization against religious and ethnic minorities and denounces the brutal execution of innocent people. Bulgaria is an integral part of the broad international coalition against terrorism. A member of the European Union and of NATO, my country lends its political support, as well as humanitarian and material aid, within the scope of its possibilities. We welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign terrorist fighters.

Combating radicalization, supporting State-building in Iraq and cooperating with regional partners are essential. We welcome the election of Mr. Haider Al Abadi as Prime Minister of Iraq. We hope that, under his leadership, a Government of broad representation will be established in order to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

Bulgaria greatly values the role of the United Nations in Iraq and appreciates the contribution of Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, former Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. We stand for a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-State solution formula. That is possible only through direct negotiations with no preconditions and in conformity with the relevant international obligations. Any durable ceasefire should address both Israeli security concerns and Palestinian demands to abolish the Gaza closure regime.

The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty was a major achievement of the international community. Just over a year later, the threshold of 50 ratifications was reached this morning. I am glad that my country is among those 50 States that have made the entry into force of that important legal instrument a reality. The Arms Trade Treaty fills a serious gap in international law. It establishes regulations for the trade in conventional arms at the global level. Now its implementation and universalization are of the utmost importance.

Twenty-five years ago, the Berlin Wall fell and the democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe began. My country Bulgaria chose to become a modern European democracy. We put our country back on the path of freedom, independence, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Our society has proved its firm commitment to democratic values and principles. We have witnessed similar political changes across South-East Europe. The Balkan countries have become partners, sharing the same values and projects for the future. We have built bridges of trust, friendship and mutual respect. We are working together to improve links and competition in order to increase prosperity in the Balkans.

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are at the heart of my country's foreign policy. Bulgaria's commitment to advancing the human rights agenda throughout the United Nations system was further strengthened under the successful Bulgarian

chairmanship of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Bulgaria is determined to further contribute to promoting and upholding human rights internationally as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021, and will rely on its partners' valuable support of its candidature.

My country welcomes the appointment of Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husein of Jordan as the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — an excellent choice by the Secretary-General. We wish Prince Zeid all success in fulfilling his mandate.

We support the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front Action Plan to safeguard human rights around the world. Bulgaria commends Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his insightful vision and global leadership with regard to that initiative and his valuable contribution to advancing the human rights agenda throughout the United Nations.

Bulgaria is concerned about the anti-Semitic attacks that have taken place recently, especially in Europe. As a country that saved 48,000 Bulgarian Jews from deportation during the Second World War, Bulgaria strongly condemns the recurring trend of brutal and disgusting manifestations of anti-Semitism.

This year, the international community is celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which set a universal standard for the effective promotion of children's rights. Bulgaria commends UNICEF for its enormous contribution during that time to improving children's lives and advancing the child agenda around the world. As a member of the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board this year, my country supports and actively participates in all efforts aimed at child protection and achieving results for children.

My country is convinced that the United Nations reform process should continue in order to enhance the efficiency, representativeness and transparency of the entire system, and to make it more adequate and responsive to the new realities. As a member of the Eastern European regional group, Bulgaria reiterates its position in favour of allocating at least one additional non-permanent seat to the Group in an enlarged Security Council. Bulgaria aspires to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2018-2019 term.

At the end of 2016, the second term of office of the current and highly respected Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, will come to an end. My country greatly values his outstanding leadership and commitment. Bulgaria expects that, when the time comes, the States Members of the United Nations will be able to elect a worthy successor. To that end I would like to recall the relevant General Assembly resolution, which states that,

> "[i]n the course of the identification and appointment of the best candidate for the post of Secretary-General, due regard shall continue to be given to regional rotation and shall also be given to gender equality" (*resolution 51/241, annex, para. 59*).

Bulgaria is convinced that the time has finally come for the East European regional group to be represented at the helm of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nishani: It is a great pleasure for me to address the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. First, allow me to congratulate the President of the Assembly on his election to that post and to assure him of the full support of my country during this session. I believe that, under his leadership and given his prior experience, he will further advance the achievements of his predecessor, who worked with dedication to achieve concrete results.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his vision and leadership at the helm of the United Nations and his continuing efforts to revitalize and reform the Organization.

Albania is committed to an efficient and coherent United Nations, fit for its purpose as a multidimensional system. We support its strengthened role and contribution to efforts to preserve peace and security, eradicate poverty, inequality and disparity, achieve sustainable human and economic development, and promote respect for and protect human rights as a universal value of humankind. A more fitting United Nations, with the ability to swiftly respond to man-made or natural crises and effectively use available human and financial resources, is key to achieving those objectives in view of an increasingly chaotic and hungry world.

Maintaining, restoring and strengthening peace and security constitute one of the three pillars of the work of the United Nations. With so many resources and so much knowledge and manpower invested in dealing with the various and complex crises around the globe, it is simply impossible to ignore the contribution the Organization has made to the world, year upon year, decade upon decade. Yet in 2014 the challenges to peace, security and human values have continued, necessitating more responsive, coordinated and swift reactions on the part of the United Nations.

We deplore the events in South Sudan, where tragedies have been played out and continue to shake human consciences. Fighting along ethnic lines has brought far too much suffering to the innocent population. Only a negotiated political solution that considers, protects and respects the rights of all the communities concerned can help rebuild trust and understanding, turning the page on a better future for the youngest country in the world.

It is hard to find the words to describe the situation in Syria. After more than three years of deadly fighting, the country is barely liveable. Every kind of horrible act has happened there. More than 170,000 people have died, millions are refugees, and large parts of the country are in ruins. With fighting and mass atrocities being committed every day, any hope of ending the war is a remote dream for those still trapped there. Albania joined the initiative taken by some 60 States Members of the United Nations to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Unfortunately, like many other initiatives on Syria, the effort was vetoed in the Security Council. We reiterate and reaffirm that the perpetrators of atrocities in Syria must be held accountable and that the people of Syria deserve relief and justice.

The events this year in Ukraine have been deeply worrying. What we thought was behind us once and for all, what we believed belonged to the history books and would serve as a lesson for today's generation and those of the future — acts violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another country, blatantly infringing and undermining the Charter of the United Nations — was unfortunately exhumed by a Member of the United Nations, a permanent member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation.

Despite all the propaganda that Russia spewed forth, the Ukrainian crisis had nothing to do with protecting the rights of ethnic Russians. It was much simpler — from the first, it was about the ambition of a more powerful country to redraw another's borders in order to satisfy its appetite for its neighbour's territory. Although the Security Council has been unable to act on this issue, the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly not to accept Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. The States Members of the United Nations, including Albania, made clear their support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and their full respect for the norms and principles of international law, and we reiterate that international relations must be governed by full respect for the principles and norms of international law and the Charter. The case of Ukraine is no exception.

With these crises and disasters erupting in a frightening pattern and the world spiraling into insecurity, development has also been under stress. The United Nations has contributed to raising global awareness of the challenges facing development and the sustainable solutions that can bring economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection and put our planet on a sustainable path.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) created one of the most successful global anti-poverty drives in history. Covering poverty, hunger, maternal and child health, gender equality, education and the environment, the MDGs have seen important progress at the national, regional and global levels and have improved the lives of millions. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved since 2005,

but with the deadline just months away, a lot remains to be done.

But another ambitious long-term sustainability agenda, designed to succeed the MDGs, is in the making. Albania has been an active participant in the global consultations focused on making the people's voices part of the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. Albania has agreed to test a proposed development goal on governance and the rule of law designed to help countries achieve sustainable development. We hope our experience in monitoring governance, the rule of law and effective, capable institutions will help to inform the upcoming post-2015 agenda of the United Nations.

Terrorism remains a major threat to international peace and security, and the fight against terrorism is a priority that requires a greater commitment. We are aware that this global threat can be countered only with collective action and a powerful response. Albania condemns in the strongest terms all terrorist attacks by terrorist groups and organizations in Iraq and Syria, including and especially by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Conscious that terrorism is a threat without borders, a threat to human values and principles as well as to individual countries and regions, Albania has joined the recently created international coalition aimed at deterring and eventually defeating ISIL.

European integration and cooperation in our region, and the geopolitical and security situation in Europe, have changed significantly in recent months. The Western Balkans, of which my country is part, is an important geo-strategic European region and one that recently committed fully to a path of increased political stability, economic progress and sustainable development, with strengthened cooperation, security characterized by good relations with its neighbours, and peace consolidation. The European route is the best guarantee for achieving these objectives in our region.

We are committed to resolving various bilateral issues as soon as possible, in the interests of our people and our neighbourly relations. We are fully aware that we must enact a number of measures to eradicate corruption and organized crime. Like every country in the region, we have expressed our willingness to conduct joint reforms that will bring increased economic stability and prosperity for our citizens and that will open markets and attract foreign investment.

The Republic of Kosovo is one of the members of our Western Balkan community, the youngest State in the region. In less than six years as an independent State, Kosovo has managed, through a transformative development agenda, to enjoy wide, uninterrupted international recognition and to successfully integrate into international, regional and global organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Bank for Development, the Venice Commission, the South-East European Cooperation Process and others. Kosovo has become an important factor for peace and stability in the region, and Albania fully supports its overall development, as well as its stability and territorial integrity within its current borders.

Kosovo's progress, the new atmosphere in the region, and the need for the region as a whole to move towards more cooperation and prosperity have led down the path to successful European Union-sponsored talks between Kosovo and Serbia as two equal partners in seeking concrete solutions to technical issues of importance to their citizens. Time has shown that engaging in dialogue was a wise decision. Dialogue has produced concrete results, brought the two countries closer to each other, and facilitated and sped up the European Union integration path for both States. Albania fully supports the process of dialogue and calls for the full implementation of the agreements reached.

To date, Kosovo has been recognized by 108 States Members of the United Nations, representing more than half of the United Nations membership. Recognition has without doubt been an important factor in Kosovo's progress. That is why, as before, we call on the countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo to do so, since in so doing they would not only help the people of Kosovo advance towards their future but also contribute to peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We remain convinced that the quick and full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement represents a condition indispensable to the sustainable stability of Macedonia, to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and to fulfilling and realizing the rights of Albanians. Albania encourages the continuation of dialogue between the Belgrade authorities and the Albanians of the Presheva valley to

promote their rights in accordance with international standards, focusing especially on solving economic, social, educational and cultural problems.

During the past two decades, Albania has been transformed from a totalitarian State into a functioning democracy. Progress is evident, above all, in the field of human rights. The protection and promotion of human rights are one of the national priorities and part of Albania's foreign policy. Albania offers a valuable model of respect for diversity, tolerance and coexistence for the Balkan region and beyond. For the Albanian people, tolerance and hospitality are inherent values derived from our national tradition.

The presentation of Albania's candidacy for membership on the Human Rights Council for the 2015-2017 term is only a logical consequence of our road towards building a society based on human rights. We are confident that Albania has accumulated valuable experience in democracy over the years that it can share with other member countries of the United Nations. Moreover, by reaffirming the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, Albania is committed to bringing a national and regional perspective into the Council's deliberations and advocacy of human rights worldwide.

We are aware that our membership in the Council for the 2015-2017 term is a challenge bearing great responsibility to justify the confidence of Member States. On the other hand, Human Rights Council membership would serve as an impetus for my country to further democratization and to raise human rights standards. Therefore, Albania, after obtaining the endorsement of the group of Eastern European States, would welcome and appreciate the support of all other Member States for its candidacy to the Council.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Albania's determination to continue its support of the United Nations agenda and strengthening the role of the United Nations globally.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bujar Nishani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Hungary.

Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Áder (*spoke in Hungarian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): "If you seek peace, prepare for war." Those are the words of Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus' fourth- or fifth-century tract *De Re Militari*, written more than 1,600 years ago. People have quoted that saying numerous times and in many circumstances. If the Assembly believes after all this that I am going to speak about the wars and armed conflicts raging throughout the world, it is mistaken. Instead, I would like to speak to the Assembly about a war and a battle that we seem to be losing. It is a war we are waging against our own natural environment and against our own human nature.

Two days ago here in the General Assembly Hall, many heard the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President Obama about the dire consequences of climate change (see A/69/PV.6). We heard very detailed statistics illustrating the gravity of the situation and the need for us to pool our efforts. And we have been preparing for that for a long time.

When did we first notice signs of trouble with the environment? Few people may know that the first clear signal came in 1896, when a Swedish scientist wrote that an increase in the atmospheric level of carbon dioxide would lead to a temperature rise; 60 years later, we had precise measurements to substantiate his statement. Another 30 years had to pass before here, in the United Nations, it was understood that some type of treaty or agreement would be necessary in the future to deal with the issue. Another 10 years had to pass before the Kyoto Protocol was signed. Between the first realization and the Kyoto agreement a century had passed.

After Kyoto, a number of conferences, scientific meetings and political gatherings were held. In recent decades, many people have spoken on many occasions about the consequences of climate change and the need to do something. Still the situation has continued to deteriorate. Let me cite one statistic. Since 1990 — that

is, during the past 25 years — despite all the resolve, the Kyoto agreement and all the promises, we have seen a 30 per cent increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Despite the fact that Mother Nature has warned us again and again, adverse climate events continue to occur one after the other. Allow me to mention a few examples from the past year. In 2013 in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, there were freezing temperatures in January, which was unprecedented. At the same time, in Lapland in Finland — not exactly the Mediterranean region — in May the temperature had reached 31°C, while Bethlehem experienced a white Christmas that no one remembered having seen before. In Australia, over the course of 90 days last summer, 123 temperature records were set.

The Danube is the largest river in Europe and it has warned us again and again. Allow me to report a Hungarian example. Since before the Second World War, the Danube River has flooded many times, but until recently it had never risen to the level of 8 metres, even at the flood's highest point. In the past four years, the Danube has risen above 8 metres on four separate occasions. In fact last year, it rose close to 9 metres.

Floods, typhoons and other adverse meteorological events are taking place in regions where they have never occurred before and at unprecedented times of the year. We are meeting here in New York. Two years ago here in New York, Hurricane Sandy caused damage valued at $20 billion, and more than 40 people died. This all took place despite the fact that for years on end the New York City leadership had been cautioned by scientists that trouble would occur and that protection for embankments, among others, must be strengthened. A few hundred million dollars would have been spent to that end; instead, the damage caused by Sandy cost far more. That is why, two days ago, the Assembly heard the Mayor of New York speak of the next 35 years and the desire to reduce New York's emissions by 80 per cent.

In recent days, we have spoken on many occasions about our preparations for the 2015 Paris conference and the desire to reach an agreement there. I believe that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon needs to be recognized in that regard. He has truly done his utmost to ensure that we can reach a common conclusion in Paris in 2015. The question is, are we Member States doing all we can? Will we do all that we can to ensure success in Paris?

The speeches I have heard over the past few days have not made me optimistic. The speeches I have heard deflected responsibility and reflected a type of political narrow-mindedness that is not terribly promising. Why can we not listen to the wisdom and advice of our scientists? Why can we not accept scientific results that today appear evident? Why can we not accept the signals being dispatched by our planet? Why can we not learn from all of the lessons provided by Mother Nature? Why are we not learning from our own example?

There is one good example that we could learn from. It involves chlorofluorocarbon gases and the damage they cause to the ozone layer. Basically, those gases were first used in the 1950s. It took only 30 years for the ozone layer to be reduced by 40 per cent in the area above Antarctica. That was also enough time for people in every country to understand the medical consequences. I note, among others, the high incidence of dermatological cancers. It was basically only at the very last moment in Montreal that an agreement was struck, as a result of which we banned those gases. After 35 years, last week we saw the first report discussing a regeneration of the ozone layer.

Regarding political narrow-mindedness, we saw examples of that in the past. I will cite one. United States President Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, Donald Hodel, said that one way to protect against the thinning ozone layer was to purchase wide-brim hats and wear dark sunglasses. Why must we wait for the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide to result in a situation as serious as that involving the ozone layer? Why can we not, late next year, make Paris as successful as Montreal?

I believe that the problem is larger than we imagine. Scientists already agree that the desired and often articulated objective of limiting the temperature increase to 2°C has become increasingly elusive. Only a few days ago, we read that the carbon dioxide concentration has never been higher than it was last year. We may well have reached the point at which, whether or not we come to an agreement today or tomorrow, scientists will tell us that all the consequences of irresponsible decisions past and present would still be felt in the future in the form of floods, typhoons and other adverse climate events.

We have to come to terms with the idea — and I would say that it will be very difficult — that the coming generation, our children's generation, will

unfortunately have to live with that situation. We will have to pay a dear price for our irresponsible environmental policies.

Today it is no longer enough to reduce emissions. It is no longer enough to agree to reduce emissions. We have to prepare for more and more serious natural events and disasters. We have to heed the advice of Nicholas Stern, who said eight years ago that if we did not spend 1 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP) on prevention, then the environmental damage we would suffer could amount to as much as 20 per cent of GDP.

I have just cited the example of New York City. A few hundred million dollars would have been enough to mitigate damages totaling several billion. The New York example tells us that we are not in the twenty-fourth hour, but in the twenty-fifth. The tragedy endured by this metropolis, the host of our meeting, again justifies the words of Vegetius, somewhat amended to the situation — if you seek calm, prepare for disaster.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Hungary for the statement he has just made.

Mr. János Áder, President of Hungary, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.